## Nan of Music Mountain

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN Author of "WHISPERING SMITH"

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* (Copyright by Charles Scribner's Sons) CHAPTER XXIV .- Continued.

--16---Another bullet, deliberately aimed,

chipped the rock above him. Nan, agonizing in her suspense, cried out she must join him and go with him if he went. He steadied her with a few words. A bullet struck again victously close between them. De Spain spoke slowly: "Give me your Without turning his head, he held out his hand, keeping his eyes ridge. "How far is it to that road, Nati?

She looked toward the faint line that lay in the deep shadows below. "Three hundred yards."

"Nan, if it wasn't for you, I couldn't travel this country at all," he remarked with studious unconcern. "Last time I had no ammunition-this time, no rifle-you always have what's needed. How high are we, Nan?"

"Seven hundred feet."

"Elevate for me, Nan, will you?" "Remember the wind," she faltered. adjusting the sight as he had asked. With the cautioning words she

passed the burnished weapon, glittering yet with the raindrops, into his hand. A flash came from the distant ridge. Throwing his rifle to his shoulder, De Spain covered a hardly perceptible black object on the trail midway between Sassoon's ranch-house and a little bridge. Then he fired before Nan could believe he had lined the sights. Once, twice, three times his hand fell and rose sharply on the lever, with every mark of precision, yet so rapidly Nan could not understand how he could discover what his shots were doing.

The fire came steadily back, and deliberately, without the least intimation of being affected by De Spain's return. She had never before seen a man shooting to kill another. The very horror of watching De Spain, at bay among the rocks, fascinated her. Since the first day they had met she had hardly seen a rifle in his hands. She strove to look. The butt of the heating rifle lay close against the redmarked cheek she knew so well, and to the tips of the fingers every particle of the man's being was alive with strength and resource. Some strange fascination drew her senses out toward him as he knelt and threw shot after shot at the distant figure hidden on the ridge. She held out her arms and clasped her hands toward him in an act of devotion. Then, while she looked, breathlessly. he took his eyes an instant from the sights. "He's running!" exclaimed De Spain as the rifle butt went instantly back to his cheek. "Whoever he is, God help him now!"

The words were more fearful to Nan than an imprecation. He had driven his enemy from the scant cover of a rut in the trall, and the man was fleeing for new cover and for life. Bullet after bullet pitilessly led the escaping wretch. Suddenly De Spain jerked the rifle from his cheek, threw back his head, and swept his left hand across his straining eyes. Once more the rifle came up to place and flame shot again in the gray morning light from the hot muzzle. The rifle fell der the brow of a hill ahead, away from the shoulder. The black speck running toward the ranchhouse stumbled, as if stricken by an ax, and in the roadway. It told of a man shot sprawted headlong on the trail, Throw- in his tracks as he was running toward but few words to exchange the n

ond he waited. Nan watched the rifle of him, Lefever got off his horse and, slowly come down, unfired, and saw bending intently over the sudden page his drawn face slowly relax. Without torn out of a man's life, recast the taking his eyes off the sprawling scene that had taken place, where he speck, he rose stiffly to his feet. As if stood, half an hour earlier. Some little in a dream she saw his hand stretched time Lefever spent patiently deciphertoward her and heard, as he looked ing the story printed in the rutted road,

De Spain, rifle in hand, looked back, study at length and followed back the The sun, bursting in splendor across trail of the running feet that had been the great desert, splashed the valley stricken at the pool. He stooped in and the low-lying ridge with ribboned front of a fragment of rock jutting up gold. Farther up the gap horsemen, beside the road, studied it a while and, stirred by the firing, were riding rapidly down toward Sassoon's ranch- empty cartridge-shells, examined them, house. But the black thing in the sunshine lay quite still.

CHAPTER XXV.

Lefever to the Rescue.

under the restraint of waiting in the his companions, 'he won't care whether storm, was ready long before daylight you join him now, or at ten o'clock, or to break orders and ride in to find De Spain.

with his men facing him in their sad- in forty rows of apple trees. It's not

gap with me this morning under any head that was hit that time. But it misunderstanding or any false pre- was to a finish-and blamed if at first tense," he began cheerfully, "Bob it didn't scare me. I thought it might Scott and Bull will stay right here. If, be Henry. Hang it, get down and see by any chance, De Spain makes his for yourselves, boyy way out while the rest of us are hunt- Eipaso answered his invitation with the answer, "at least, not over the ing for him, you'll be here to signal us an inquiry. "Who was this fellow -three shots, Bob-or to ride in with fighting with?" De Spain to help carry the rest of us

twixt here and the rallroad knowsthat De Spain and Nan Morgan have fastened up to each other for the long ride down the dusty trail together. That, I take it, is their business. But rifle away from him if he could her uncle, old Duke, and Gale, and the whole bunch, I hear, turned dead sore on it, and have fixed it up to beat them. You all know the Morgans. They're some bunch-and they stick for one another like hornets, and all hold together in a fight. So I don't want any man to ride in there with me thinking he's going to a wedding. He isn't. He may or may not be going to a funeral, but he's not going to a shivaree."

Frank Elpaso glanced sourly at his companions. "I guess everybody here is wise, John."

"I know you are, Frank," retorted Lefever testily; "that's all right. I'm fire on us before we get there." only explaining. And I don't want you to get sore on me if I don't show you a fight." Frank Elpaso grunted. am under orders." John waved his hand. "And I can't do anything-"

"But talk," growled Frank Elpaso, not waving his hand.

Lefever started hotly forward in his suddle. "Now look here, Frank." He pointed his finger at the objecting the horsemen with reserve when ranger. "I'm here for business, not for rigidly on the suspicious spot on the pleasure. Any time I'm free you can together less responsive than qual talk to me-

"Not till somebody gags you, John," interposed Elpaso moodily.

"Look here, Elpaso," demanded Lefever, spurring his horse smartly toward the Texan, "are you looking for a fight with me right here and now?" "Yes, here and now," declared El-

paso fiercely. "Or, there and then," interposed Kennedy, ironically, "some time, somewhere, or no time, nowhere. Having heard all of which, a hundred and fifty times from you two fellows, let us have peace. You've pulled it so often, over at Sleepy Cat, they've got it in doublefaced, red-seal records. Let's get started."

"Right you are, Farrell," assented Lefever, "but-"

"Second verse, John. You're boss here; what are we going to do? That's all we want to know."

"Henry's orders were to wait here till ten o'clock this morning. There's claimed, leaning forward to emphisize been firing inside twice since twelve his words and adding the full orb, of o'clock last night. He told me to pay his eye to his sincerity of manner no attention to that. But if the whole at all, Satt. This is all friends. place hadn't been under water all friendly. But," he coughed sti night, I'd have gone in, anyway. This as if in apology, "if Henry shop last time it was two high-powered turn up O. K., we'll-ahem-be in guns, picking at long range and, if I'm any judge of rifles and the men probably behind them, someone must have nod from Lefever Tommie Megg got hurt. It's all a guess-but I'm going in there, peaceably if I can, to look horses, rode rapidly back to the urn for Henry de Spain; if we are fired on near the hill and, facing about, hated, there's any talking to be done-

with Tommie Meggeson."

Leaving Scott in the trees, the little Lefever, in the circumstances, was not bedraggled in the aspen grove. sorry. His only anxiety was to keep Elpaso from riding ahead far enough to embroil them in a quarrel before he himself should come up.

Half-way to Duke's house they found small bridge had gone out. It cut off the direct road, and, at Elpaso's suggestion, they crossed over to follow the ridge up the valley. Swimming their horses through the backwater that covered the depression to the south, they gained the elevation and proceeded. unmelested, on their way. As they approached Sassoon's place, Elpaso, riding ahead, drew up his horse and sat a moment studying the trail and casting an occasional glance in the direction of the ranch-house, which lay un-

When Lefever rode up to him, he saw the story that Elpaso was reading ing the lever again like lightning. De the house-and, in the judgment of Lefever asked gingerly about the fight. Spain held the rifle back to his check. these men, fatally shot-for, while his He made no mention whatever of the He did not fire. Second after sec- companions spread like a fan in front across the far guif, one word: "Come!" and marked by a wide crimson splash They reached the end of the trail. In the middle of it. He rose from his looking about, picked up a number of and tossed them away. Then he straightened up and looked searchingly across the gap. Only the great, silent face of El Capitan confronted him. It told no tales,

"If this was Henry de Spain," mut-Lefever, chafing in the aspen grove tered Lipase, when Lefever rejoined never."

"That is not Henry," asserted Le-With the first peep of dawn, and fever with his usual cheer. "Not withdles, Lefever made a short explanation. Henry's gun, not Henry's heels, not "I don't want any man to go into the Henry's hair, and thereby, not Henry's

"That, also, is a question. Certainly De Spain's mind that somewhere in out. Now, it's like this," he added, ad- not with Henry de Spain, because the had heard the voice before.

much less De Spain." "Unless he used another rifle,

gested Kennedy. "Tell me how they could get hi gun at all. I don't put Henry qu' high with a rifle as with a reve if you want to split hairs-mind, if you want to split hairs. But n that's ever seen him handle ther

would want to try to take any k a gun from him. Whoever it was Lefever got up into his safidle "threw some ounces of lead int plece of rock back there, the don't understand how anyone cob' se a man lying behind it.

"Anyway, whoever was hit he been carried down the road. Fe'll try Sassoon's ranch-house if they-

In the sanshine a man in sleeves, leaning against the jamb, "I in the open doorway of Sas shack, watching the invaders an rode around the bill and ginge proached. Lefever recognized Satisfor-gan. He flung a greeting to him fom the saddle.

Satt answered in kind, but he !! drew up, and he seemed to Lefeve John sparred with him for infounttion and Satterice gave back noting but words.

"Can't tell us anything above Spain, eh?" echoed Lefever at legth. "All right, Satt, we'll find someody "All right, Satt, we'll find son that can. Is there a bridge our to Duke's on this trail?"

Satt's nose wrinkled into his nemal smile. "There's a bridge-" The report of three shots fired in the disance, seemingly from the mouth of thegap, interrupted him. He paused in hy utterance. There were no further cots, and he resumed: "There is a padge and he resumed: "There is a le that way, yes, but it was washed out last night. They're blockaded. Juke and Gale are over there. They're petty sore on your man De Spain. You'd better keep away from 'em this moning unless you're looking for trouble

Lefever, having all needed informa tion from Scott's signal, raised his hand quickly. "Not at all," he ex-

None of his companions needer told how to get prudently away. Elpaso and Wickwire wheeled deir -we've got to fight for it. And if here's any talking to be done-" with their rifles across their arms. Lefever and Kennedy followed leist ely. "You can do it," grunted Elpaso.
"Thank you, Frank. And I will do it.
I need not say that Kennedy will ride ahead with me, Elpaso and Wickwire rapidly down the gap to the say that will be supported to the say that will be say the say rapidly down the gap to the say that will be say the say that will be say the say th dezvous.

Of all the confused impressions that party trotted smartly up the road, crowded Nan's memory after the wild picking their way through the pools night on Music mountain, the poost and across the brawling streams that vivid was that of a noticeably light tore over the trail toward Duke Mor- stepping and not ungraceful fat risn gan's place. The condition of the trail advancing, hat in hand, to greet her as broke their formation continually and she stood with De Spain, weary and

> A smile flamed from her eyes turning at once, he rebuked De Spain with dignity for not introducing him to Nan, and while De Spain made apologies Lefever introduced himself.

> "And is this," murmured Nan, looking at him quizzically, "really Mr. John Lefever whom I've heard so in stories about?"

She was conscious of his pleasing eyes and even teeth as he smiled again. "If they have come from Mr. de S -I warn you," said John, "take t with all reserve." "But they haven't all come from Mr.

de Spaln."

"If they come from any of friends, discredit them in advance, You could believe what my enemies say," he ran on; then added ingenuously, "if I had any enemies!" To De Spain he talked very little. It seemed to take crimson pool in the road near soon's hut.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Puppets of Fate.

When Nan rode with De Spain anto Sleepy Cat that morning, Lefever had already told their story to Jeffries the telephone from Calabasas, and Mrs. Jeffries had thrown open her house to receive Nan. Weary from expo confusion and hunger, Nan was only too grateful for a refuge.

On the evening of the second day De Spain was invited to join the family at supper. In the evening the Jeffrigat went down town.

De Spain was talking with Nara la the living room when the telephone bell rang in the library.

De Spain took the call, and a man's voice answered his salutation. The speaker asked for Mr. de Spain seemed particular to make sure of his identity. "This," repeated De Spain more t

once, and somewhat testily, "is Henry de Spain speaking." "I'd like to have a little talk with Jim." you, Mr. de Spain."

"Who are you?" The vein of sharpness in the ques tion met with no deviation from slow, even tone of the voice at the other end of the wire. "I am not in position to give you my name," came

wire." A vague impression suddenly crosse

dressing the others. "You, all of you other fellow, I think, was using soft. "Do you suppose I could come up

at, where you are tonight for a few miantes' alk?" continued the man coolly. "Not unless you have something very Important."

"What I have is more important to you than to me."

De Spain took an instant to decide. 'All right," he said impatiently; "come along. Only-" he paused to let the word sink in, "-if this is a game you're springing-"

"I'm springing no game," returned the man evenly. "Come along, then. I'll tell you just

how to get here. Do you hear?" "I'm listening."

"Leave Main street at Rancherio street. Follow Rancherio north four blocks, turn west into Grant avenue. Mr. Jeffries' house is on the corner. "I'll find it."

"Don't come any other way. If you do, you won't see me."

"I'm not afraid of you, Mr. de Spain, and I'll come as you say. There's only one thing I should like to ask. It would be as much as my life is worth to be seen talking to you. And there are other good reasons why I shouldn't like to have it known I had talked to you. Would you mind putting out the lights before I come u .- I mean, in the front of the house and in the room where we talk?"

"Not in the least. I mean-I am always willing to take a chance against any other man's. But I warn you, come prepared to take care of yourself."

"If you will do as I ask, no harn will come to anyone."

De Spain heard the receiver hung up at the other end of the wire. He signaled the operator hastily and get hold of Bob Scott. To him he explained rapidly what had occurred, and what he wanted. "Get up to Grant and Rancherio, Bob, as quick as the Lord will let you. Come by the back streets. Ther 's a high mulberry hedge at the southwest corner you can get behind. This chap may have been talking for somebody else. Anyway, look the man over when he passes under the arc light. If it is Sassoon or Gale Morgan, come into Jeffries' house by the rear door. Wait in the kitchen for my call from the living room, or a shot. I'll arrange for your getting in."

Leaving the telephone, De Spain rejoined Nan in the living room. He told her briefly of the expected visit and explained, laughingly, that his caller had asked to have the lights out and to see him alone. He made so little of the incident that Nan walked up the stairs on De Spain's arm reassured. When he kissed her at her room door and turned down the stairs again, she leaned in the half-light over the banister, waving one hand at him and murmuring the last caution: "Be careful, Henry, won't you?"

"Dearle, I'm always careful." "'Cause you're all I've got now," she whispered.

I haven't got any home-or anything-just you. Don't go to the door yourself. Leave the front door open. Stand behind the end of the piano till you are awfully sure who it is."

"What a head, Nan!" De Spain cut off the lights, threw open the front door, and in the darkness sat down on the plano stool. A heavy step on the porch, a little while later, was followed by a knock on the

open door. "Come in !" called De Spain roughly. The bulk of a large man filled and obscured for an instant the opening. then the visitor stepped carefully over the threshold. "What do you want?" asked De Spain without changing his tone. He awaited with keenness the

sound of the answer. "Is Henry de Spain here?" The voice was not familiar to De Spain's ear. He told himself the man was unknown to him, "I am Henry de Spain," he returned without hesita-

tion. "What do you want?" The visitor's deliberation was reflected in his measured speaking. "I am from Thief River," he began, and his reverberating voice was low and distinct. "I was sent in to Morgan's gap some time ago to find out who burned the Calabasas barn "

"And you report to-?" "Kennedy."

De Spain paused. A fresh conviction had flashed across his mind. "You called me up on the telephone one night last week," he said suddenly. The answer came without evasion.

"I did." "You gave me a message from Nan

Morgan that she never gave you." "I dld. I thought she needed you right off. She didn't know me as I rightly am. I knew what was going on. the stairs. Henry, I told you long ago I rode into town that evening and rode I couldn't let it interfere with the busi-

ness I'm paid to look after. That's the

reason I dodged you." "There is a chair at the left of the door; sit down. What's your name?" The man feeling around slowly, deposited his angular bulk with care up- it could have been anything but this!" on the little chair. "My name"-in the teaseness of the dark the words why did you not listen to me before emed to carry added mystery-"is

"You've got a brother-Joe Pardaloe?" suggested De Spain to trap him. "No, I've got no brother. I am just plain Jim Pardaloe."

"Say what you have got to say,

"The only job I could get in the gap was with old Duke Morgan—I've been Her breath, no longer controlled, came working for him, off and on, and spend- brokenly, and her voice trembled. ing the rest of my time with Gale and Dave Sassoon. There were three men in the barn-burning. Dave Sassoon put up the job."

"Where is Dave Bassoon now?" "Dead."

Both men were silent for a moment. "Yesterday morning's fight?" asked De Spain reluctantly. "Yes, sir,"

"How did be happen to carch as El Caphan?

"He saw a fire on Music mountain and watched the lower end of the gap all night. Sassoon was a wide-awake

man. "Well, I'm sorry, Pardaloe," continued De Spain after a moment. "No body could call it my fault. It was either he or I-or the life of a woman who never harmed a hair of his head. and a woman I'm bound to protect. He was running when he was hit. If he had got to cover again there was nothing to stop him from picking both of us off."

"He was hit in the head."

De Spain was silent. "It was a soft-nose bullet," continned Pardaloe,

Again there was a pause. "I'll tell you about that, too, Pardaloe," De Spain went on collectedly. "I lost my rifle before that man opened fire on us. Nan happened to have her rifle with her-if she hadn't, he'd 've dropped one or both of us off El Capitan. We were pinned against the wall like a couple of targets. If there were soft-nose bullets in her rifle it's because she uses them on game-bobcats and mountain lions. I never thought of it till this minute. That is it."

"What I came up to tell you has to do with Dave Sassoon. From what happened today in the gap I thought you ought to know it now. Gale and Duke quarreled yesterday over the way things turned out; they were pretty bitter. This afternoon Gale took it up again with his uncle, and it ended in Duke's driving him clean out of the gap."

"Where has he gone?"

"Nobody knows yet. Ed Wickwire oid me once that your father was shot from ambush a good many years ago. It was north of Medicine Bend, on a ranch near the Peace river; that you never found out who killed him, and that one reason why you came up into this country was to keep an eye out for a clue."

"What about it?" asked De Spain, his tone hardening.

"I was riding home one night about a month ago from Calabasas with Sassoon. He'd been drinking. I let him do the talking. He began cussing you out, and talked pretty hard about what you'd done, and what he'd done, and what he was going to do-" Nothing, it seemed, would hurry the story.

"Finally, Sassoon says: "That hound don't know yet who got his dad. It was Duke Morgan; that's who got him. I was with Duke when he turned the trick. We rode down to De Spain's ranch sae night to look up a rustier.' That," concluded Pardaloe, "was all Sassoon would my."

He stopped. He seemed to wait. There was no word of answer, none of comment from the man sitting near him. But, for one, at least, who heard the passionless, manatarons recital of a murder of the long ago, there followed a silence as relentless as fate, a silence shrouded in the mystery of the darkness and striking despair into two hearts-a silence more fearful

than any word. coughed, but he evoked no response, "I thought you was entitled to know," he said finally. "Now that Sassoon will

never talk any more." De Spain moistened his lips. Wher he spoke his voice was cracked and harsh, as if with what he had heard he had suddenly grown old.

"You are right, Pardaloe. I thank you. I-when I-in the morning. Par daloe, for the present, go back to the gap. I will talk with Wickwire-to

"Good night, Mr. de Spain." "Good night, Pardaloe."

Bending forward, limp, in his chair, supporting his head vacantly on his hands, trying to think and fearing to think, De Spain heard Pardaloe's meas ured trend on the descending steps. and listened mechanically to the retreating echoes of his footsteps down the shaded screet. Minute after minute passed. De Spain made no move. A step so light that it could only have been the step of a delicate girlhood, a step free as the footfall of youth, poised as the tread of womanhood and beauty, came down the stairs. Slight as she was, and silent as he was, she walked straight to him in the darkness, and, sinking between his feet, wound her hands through his two arms. "I heard everything, Henry," she murmured, looking up. An involuntary start of protest was his only response. "I was afraid of a plot against you. I stayed at the head of some dreadful thing would come beout again. It was not my business, and tween us-something not our fault. And now it comes to dash our cup of happiness when it is filling."

She stopped, hoping perhaps he would say some little word, that he would even pat her head, or press her hand, but he sat like one stunned. "If she pleaded, low and sorrowfully, "Oh, we were engulfed! My dear Henry! You who've given me all the happiness I have ever had-that the blood of my own should come against you and yours!" The emotion she struggled with, and fought back with all the strength of her nature, rose in a resistless tide that swept her on, in the face of his ominous silence, to despair. "You have been very kind to me

Henry-you've been the only man I've ever known that always, everywhere thought of me first. I told you I didn't deserve it, I wasn't worthy of it—"

His hands slipped silently over her hands. He gathered her close into his arms, and his tears fell on her my turned face.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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REASON FOR HIS CONDITION

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There was a beggar who sat at the gates of the tity working, time! thank and making piteous mean. And there were many of great riches who saw him daily and merchants laden with silks and spices and fresh eggs and polatoes going their way to the city Pardaloe shuffled his feet. He markets to barter, but they gave him little heed and few alms.

Cometh a day when a aft dame paused to give him her pity, to spend a moment and pay him her regards, but to give him of coins and of pieces

of gold not any. And she inquired of him, saying, Lo, thou art in rags and the blight of sloth is upon thee. Thou takest little pains with thy personal appearance and thou art lazy as no man was ever lazy before. Hast it ever been thus with thee or how didst thou come to such? And he made answer, I once had a city political job and I've never been

able to go back to work since !- Roy

K. Moulton in Topeka State Journal.

The Other Goose. The small girl stood outside the munition works at closing time. Presently she espled one of her father's workmates and approached him.

"Please, Mr. Jones, mother says will you give this label to father when you see him? He's won a goose at the raffle at the Rake and Raspberry." "Rgiht you are, missie! But he won't want a label; he's going to fetch

it from the Rake and Raspberry and carry it home tonight." "Yes, I know. That's why mother's sent this addressed label. It ain't for

the goose; it's to put on father!' The quiet wedding may be the calm

before the storm. You may have noticed that foolish people are always happy.

Che answer to the Health Question often lies in a change of table drink

